



MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

STORMWIND RESERVOIR - ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW OF FISH INTRODUCTION

Description of water body:

Name: Stormwind Reservoir

County: Petroleum

Legal description: T16N, R27E, S4, SW 1/4

Name of the drainage where the pond would be located:

The pond is located on an unnamed, ephemeral drainage of Dry Blood Creek; HUC-6 Dry Blood Creek/HUC-5 Blood Creek/HUC-4 Lower Musselshell River.

Fish species proposed for introduction:

Largemouth bass, crappie sp., bluegill, yellow perch, channel catfish

Is this species legally present in the drainage?

At the HUC-4 level, all of the proposed species are legally present. At the HUC-5 level, largemouth bass and crappie sp. are legally present.

Species of Special Concern present in the drainage and associated risks:

At the HUC-4 level, blue sucker and sauger are known species of special concern present, with their presence in the drainage limited to the Musselshell River. Blue suckers may be extirpated from the drainage as they've not been documented since 1963. Although not documented, northern redbelly dace and/or northern redbelly x finescale dace hybrids may also be present in the drainage based on professional opinion. Associated risks to species of special concern are considered minimal. The proposed species are present throughout the Lower Musselshell River drainage and the proposed introduction would not result in cumulative impacts.

RISKS:

Potential for impacts on genetic structure of existing fish populations:

☒ None ☒ Minor ☐ Major

Comments: Largemouth bass, crappie sp., bluegill, & yellow perch: The potential genetic impacts to downstream fish populations of the listed species are considered negligible. Populations of the listed species may be present downstream in the Musselshell and Fort Peck Reservoir and are of introduced origin with no conservation concern for their genetic structure.

Channel catfish: The potential genetic impacts to downstream channel catfish populations are considered minor. The Musselshell drainage supports a robust, native channel catfish population that is known to move throughout the Missouri River and Fort Peck Reservoir. Careful consideration should be taken prior to introducing channel catfish in the proposed water to ensure no negative impacts to the wild population's genetic structure. Should they be introduced in the proposed water, channel catfish should come from a within drainage wild-fish transfer, which would be evaluated via an additional environmental assessment.

Impacts to any life stage of existing fish populations due to competition and/or predation?

☐ None ☒ Minor ☐ Major

Comments: The proposed species are piscivorous to varying degrees. Predation on cyprinid populations present in the reservoir would be anticipated. Competition impacts of escaped stocked fish would be of little concern as the species are already present in the Lower Musselshell River drainage and cumulative impacts are not anticipated. Predation impacts of escaped stocked fish on wild populations would vary by species, with potential minor impacts within the Blood Creek drainage. Blood Creek is ephemeral and reduced to isolated pools most years. Predation impacts from crappie sp., bluegill, and yellow perch in these isolated pools would be negligible. While long-term persistence in isolated pools would not be expected, largemouth bass and channel catfish could result in minor predation impacts, primarily on cyprinid and catostomid populations. Due to the relatively small scope and limited persistence of such impacts, they are not perceived as significant. Predation impacts downstream in the Lower Musselshell River are of little concern as the species are already present and cumulative impacts are not anticipated.

Impacts to other forms of aquatic life that may be caused by this introduction?

☐ None ☒ Minor ☐ Major

Comments: Aquatic invertebrates and amphibians would be consumed if present, but no population level impact is expected.

Potential for the proposed new species to reproduce in this location:

☒ None ☐ Minor ☒ Major

Comments: It would be anticipated that largemouth bass, crappie sp., bluegill, and yellow perch could successfully reproduce at the proposed location. Channel catfish would not be anticipated to successfully reproduce in the proposed waterbody.

If necessary, would it be feasible to remove this species after it has been stocked?

Yes, the proposed species could be removed via angling, netting, chemical treatment, and/or cessation of stocking.

Would this introduction result in impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable?

No.

Describe reasonable and prudent alternatives to this action, if any (including no action).

Alternative 1 – No Action: The No Action alternative would result in not stocking the proposed waterbody and not providing additional recreational angling opportunity in Central Montana.

Describe and evaluate mitigation, stipulations, or other control measures enforceable by the agency, if any:

The reservoir and the proposed species would be managed according to the general Eastern Fishing District regulations.

List any other agencies or individuals that may be affected by the proposed introduction:

The proposed waterbody and access to the waterbody occur on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands. BLM personnel have been consulted regarding the proposed action and have expressed support for developing recreational fisheries at the proposed location.

List all agencies and individuals who have been notified of this proposed introduction:

BLM – Lewistown Field Office

Based on this evaluation, is an EIS required? YES/NO? If no, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for the proposed action.

No EIS required. Action is expected to be minor.

Describe the level of public involvement and, given the complexity of the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate?

To date, there has been no public involvement. FWP has had conversations regarding the proposed fish stocking and location with the BLM and Montana DNRC, both of which have expressed support for the proposed action.

To ensure adequate public involvement opportunity, FWP will distribute notice of this draft EA to local recreational groups, local sporting goods stores, neighboring landowners, and interested parties. This draft EA will be posted on the FWP website and copies will be made available at the FWP Lewistown Area Resource Office. A notice of the proposed action and EA will be advertised in the *Lewistown News-Argus*.

Given the simple nature and minor impacts of the proposed action, the level of public involvement is deemed appropriate.

Comments will be accepted until: February 4, 2019

Comments may be submitted to:

Mail: Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks
Attn: Stormwind Reservoir Fish Stocking
PO Box 938
Lewistown, MT 59457

Email: clsmith@mt.gov

Online: <http://fwp.mt.gov/news/publicNotices/>

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